UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.17/1996/L.10
30 April 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Fourth session
18 April-3 May 1996
Agenda item 5 (a)

REVIEW OF CROSS-SECTORAL CLUSTERS: EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND THE TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGY, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO AGENDA 21

Draft decision submitted by the Chairman

National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building in developing countries

(Chapter 37 of Agenda 21)

1. The Commission on Sustainable Development:

(a) Having examined the report of the Secretary-General on capacity-building for sustainable development (E/CN.17/1996/15 and Add.1), notes the enhanced understanding and recognition in the international community of capacity-building issues, which has led to a greater focus on strengthening national capacities for designing national plans and strategies for sustainable development;

(b) Welcomes the efforts of those countries that have taken significant steps towards capacity-building by formulating national Agenda 21 strategies, conservation strategies and environmental action plans, expresses its appreciation to those organizations, notably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which have provided assistance to those efforts and encourages the continuation of such support;

(c) Notes the existence of long-standing institutional and other constraints in many developing countries and countries with economies in transition that need to be overcome when implementing national strategies and affirms, in this connection, that the sharing of experiences and insights from diverse capacity-building situations and measures constitutes the basis for a

collaborative learning process, noting, in this context, that the African High-Level Meeting on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), sponsored by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1995, led to the adoption of a plan of action on EIA for African countries;

(d) Emphasizes the importance of donor collaboration and coordination, highlights, in this context, the relevant role of capacity-building while promoting a more participatory approach, recognizes that there is a greater role for information technology in capacity-building and notes the planned Workshop on Capacity-Building for the Environment, to be held in November 1996 under the sponsorship of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

2. The Commission therefore:

(a) Stresses the need to keep capacity-building as one of the central objectives in the promotion of development projects and programmes in developing countries in accordance with their national priorities and stresses, in this context, the need for a long-term commitment and systematic focus in pursuing capacity-building efforts;

(b) Urges Governments and international organizations to share experiences in capacity-building and assist the developing countries through strengthened international cooperation programmes for sustainable development;

(c) Calls upon Governments and international organizations to enhance coordinated efforts to assist developing countries in their own capacity-building efforts and to encourage the active involvement of non-state actors, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other major groups, in the capacity-building of developing countries;

(d) Encourages United Nations programmes and funds, including UNDP and other relevant organizations, to continue to assist developing countries in strengthening their capacities in planning and policy-making for sustainable development through consultative processes and requests UNDP to further disseminate the results of programmes and evaluations of Capacity 21 projects undertaken at the country level;

(e) Encourages further work in carrying out action- and problem-oriented research on capacity-building issues in specific priority areas at the national level by concerned international, bilateral and non-governmental organizations.